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HOUSEHOLD CALENDAR

A radio talk by Miss Van Deman, Bureau of Home Economics, delivered in the Department of Agriculture period of the National Farm and Home Hour, broadcast by a network of 48 associate NBC stations, Wednesday, January 31, 1934.

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How do you do, Everybody.

The weather man certainly began working with me when I said last week that I'd talk about cod-liver oil and vitamin D today. For since then we've had cloudy skies with no sunshine at all, or such cold weather that we had to wear the thickest, warmest clothes we could find. No chance for the ultra-violet rays that give us vitamin D to touch anything but the tips of the noses for a few minutes. In other words not much chance for the children to get any vitamin D from sunbaths in weather like this. And you know sunshine that comes through ordinary window glass, even though it feels nice and warm on your back and makes the house a pleasant place to live in, has all the ultra-violet rays screened out. Just ordinary window glass stops these rays. That's the reason all the child health specialists say to give the baby his sunbath with the window open and nothing between his skin and the sun itself. Also in our big cities and industrial centers even the smoke in the air cuts down the effectiveness of these rays from the sun. And on these dark winter days they are nil anyway.

Now the ultra-violet rays, you know, are the ones that change to vitamin D the substance called ergosterol that's found in the skin. And it is vitamin D that helps a child's body to utilize the calcium and phosphorus in its food, and build good strong bones and teeth. Or to put it another way, vitamin D along with the foods that supply bone-building materials, prevent rickets. Some people call vitamin D the anti-rachitic vitamin.

And this is where cod-liver oil comes into the story. I couldn't help laughing up my sleeve last week when Mr. Salisbury told me to go as far as I liked in my talk on vitamin D but leave out the cod-liver oil. He and I have been so busy this week with our own particular jobs that I haven't had time to tell him what a dead give-away that was on his part. For it's about as easy to talk about vitamin D without bringing in cod liver oil, as it would be to give you a recipe for omelet without eggs. For I've never yet seen a list of food sources of vitamin D that didn't start off with cod-liver oil. It is the richest known source of vitamin D, and you can almost count on the fingers of one hand all of the other foods that contain it in even reasonably good quantities. They are egg yolk, salmon, oysters, California sardines, butter, and milk. Also there are, of course, milk and other foods enriched with vitamin D by irradiating them with ultra-violet light according to the process Doctor Steenbock of Wisconsin University patented. These are foods that contain this ergosterol, the same thing that is in our skin, and when the ultra-violet light strikes this ergosterol it changes to vitamin D just the way it does when the direct rays of the sun have a chance to shine on our bare skin.

But now to come back to cod-liver oil and its part in the diet of every well-fed child. By the way, for our purposes we think of cod-liver

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oil as a food, not a medicine. The consensus of opinion of the nutrition people seems to be that every child living in our climate we have, needs cod-liver oil every day all the year around. Our family food budgets for the use of relief agencies recommend for every child less than 2 years old at least 2 teaspoons of cod-liver oil every day, and says that 3 to 4 teaspoons would be better.

Now, as you know, there are on sale many cod-liver oils, some plain, some flavored. Some are made from the livers of the fish caught off the Grand Banks of Newfoundland by the fishermen who put out from the famous old village of Gloucester, Massachusetts, and other towns on the "stern and rock bound" coast of New England. Then over in Norway right now thousands of descendants from the old sea faring-vikings are going over their nets and getting their boats ready to sail to the fishing grounds away up north of the Arctic Circle. There's no sunlight up there, and no real daylight, but to make up for it next summer they'll see the sun twenty-four hours a day. Well, if you've ever sailed into that Northern harbor of Hammerfast with the mid-night sun shining on you, you don't need to be told how important the cod-liver oil industry is to Norway. Your nose gives you plenty of evidence. And incidentally the people up there eat all the fresh cod-livers that they can lay their hands on in the winter. There's one way the Norwegians take their cod-liver oil.

These different cod-liver oils coming from different countries and extracted by different processes, naturally vary somewhat in their potency. You've probably noticed on some bottles the strength marked as so and so many units. Unfortunately the unit system isn't standardized. There are 3 or more units being used to indicate vitamin D potency of a cod-liver oil -- the A. D. M. A. unit, adopted by the American Drug Manufacturers Association; the Steenbock vitamin D unit, now accepted by the American Medical Association; and the Oslo unit, described by a leading Norwegian scientist. Also there's just coming into use an International unit, recommended by the health organization of the League of Nations.

A standard cod-liver oil contains about 100. A.D.M.A. units, or 13 Steenbock units per gram. So if you want to be sure of the Vitamin D potency of the cod-liver oil you buy, see whether the units are marked on it.

There's another chapter to the cod-liver oil story. It has to do with vitamin A. So continued in our next.

Goodbye for this time.